



SOIL AND WATER Resources

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Commissioners Take the Show on the Road and Conduct a Meeting and Tour in Dallas County

By Jessica Royston, Public Information Specialist, District Support Unit

On May 14, the Soil and Water Conservation Program packed up everything but the kitchen sink and traveled to Buffalo where the Dallas County Soil and Water Conservation District hosted the Soil and Water Districts Commission for their May meeting. Commissioners, department staff, district supervisors and employees crowded into



Participants of the May 14 commission tour in Dallas County listen to Wallace and Greg Hicks discuss conservation practices on their farm.

a room at the Simms Restaurant and held a morning meeting. Cost-share was discussed as well as an update on group health insurance, job descriptions, the ninth call for Special Area Land Treatment projects and the budget for fiscal year 2009. Minutes of the meeting are available at www.dnr.mo.gov/env/swcp/meetings.htm.

After lunch, a caravan of buses, cars and trucks left the restaurant to tour four sites. Matt Hale, AgNPS SALT manager for Dallas County SWCD, provided the background information for each stop. The first stop was the Wallace and Greg Hicks farm where everyone saw a grazing system, WQ-10 exclusion, riparian buffers and nutrient management. The Hicks' run a 48 head cow/calf operation on a grazing system. The tour was lucky enough to be there just as some turkey litter was being spread. The Hicks' said they only fed 11 bales of hay last year.

"We've only been on it for about one year but our weaning weights have increased," said Greg Hicks. "Every three days they are on a new pasture and we've really seen an increase in milk production and a decrease in the amount of hay needed."

The second and third stops were at the Lovel Powell and Ed Ford farms where the group was shown different spring developments. The first one that was pointed out had been put in about five or six years ago and has never been dry.

The fourth and final stop for the tour was the Dean Hostetler turkey farm which housed a stack shed and a composter. The Hostetler farm



Missouri Department
of Natural Resources
Soil and Water Conservation Program

produces about 60,000 birds each year. Hostetler also sells his turkey litter to area farmers.

“There’s such a demand for turkey litter right now,” said Hostetler. “I could get rid of twice as much if I had it.”

Commissioners have gone on tours before and will try to hold meetings and do two tours per year in different parts of the state. This will help make the meetings more accessible to districts as well as get the commissioners some experience with practices that they might not be as familiar with in their area.

“I think it’s a great idea to have these tours,” said Commissioner Dan Devlin from Knox County. “I don’t get to see a lot of some of the practices we looked at today. This gets you exposed to something different.”

The next tour is planned for the September meeting with the location yet to be determined. The next regular commission meeting is scheduled for July 9 in Jefferson City.

Program Office Revises Job Descriptions

*By Chris Wieberg, Environmental Specialist,
District Support Unit*

Revised job descriptions were recently released. Here is a quick update on what changes were made to each position. For the full memo on the new job descriptions, visit www.dnr.mo.gov/env/swcp/correspondence.htm.

District Program Specialist I

The new DPS I description no longer utilizes the workload rating equivalent chart. The duties and responsibilities are very specific in the new description. The position is no longer responsible for any district programs such as accounting or cost-share. The duties and responsibilities are secretarial in nature and are done under the supervision of the board. The knowledge, skills and abilities are introductory and the experience and education have been reduced by not requiring any experience.



Tour guide and AgNPS SALT manager for Dallas County, Matt Hale, talks with Soil and Water Districts Commission Chairman, Leon Kreisler, during the May 14 commission tour.

District Program Specialist II

The new DPS II description no longer utilizes the workload rating equivalent chart. The duties and responsibilities are very specific in the new description. The position is specifically responsible for all financial tracking of the accounting or cost-share programs. The duties and responsibilities are directly related to managing the state cost-share program, managing the district assistance grants and district operations. The duties are done under the supervision of the board. The knowledge, skills and abilities are intermediate and the experience and education have been reduced by not requiring education greater than high school and by reducing the amount of experience needed.

District Technician I

The new DT I description now states that the position works under the direct supervision of the board. The duties and responsibilities are very similar to the old description. The position primarily assists with the technical work in the district. The knowledge, skills and abilities are introductory and the experience and education have been reduced by not requiring education greater than high school and by reducing the amount of experience needed.

District Technician II

The new DT II description now states that the position works under the direct supervision of the board and is responsible for certifying, designing and technically signing cost-share claims for certain practices. Prior to this position being funded in any district, a verification assessing the candidate's certification skills will be performed.

The certification categories available will be Conservation Planner Certification and the Baseline Conservation Practice Certification. Additional certifications such as nutrient management, pest management, structures, pipeline/irrigation, grazing management, woodland management, and accounting and cost-share data entry (accounting and cost-share data entry is only available for districts that do not have a DPS II) may affect the funding of this position. The duties and responsibilities require the position to be responsible for the technical district cost-share work. The knowledge, skills and abilities are specific and the experience and education have been reduced by not making education a requirement and by reducing the amount of experience needed.

The education and experience has however been made specific in terms of requiring the Conservation Planner Certification and the Baseline Conservation Practice Certification.

Lincoln University has agreed to work as a private contractor to train, evaluate and certify district technician positions. With their assistance, our goal is to ensure that every district board can have a technician that is certified to determine practice applicability, design practices and determine and certify the completeness of practices.

New Web-Based Tool Allows Technicians to Draw Conservation Practices

*By Chris Wieberg, Environmental Specialist,
District Support Unit*

The new Conservation Management GIS tool is a Web-based program designed to aid district technicians in planning and designing state cost-share conservation practices. This site allows the user to create a practice plan for any conservation practice offered through the state cost-share program. It is created using an online GIS tool where the user draws the practice features that will be installed to complete the practice. This information is then saved for viewing and editing at a later date. Each user will be able view the practices that their district draws.

When practices are completed, the information will then be used to make a statewide GIS layer of conservation practices completed by districts for that fiscal year. Staff is aggressively working on this tool so that technicians can be trained as soon as possible.

Budget Expansion Will Increase Funding to District Assistance Grants

By Jim Boschert, Planner III, Planning and Grant Unit

The FY09 budget for the Soil and Water Conservation Program includes an expansion of \$375,665 for district assistance grants along with a core redirect of \$85,000 from the research appropriation. This amounts to a total increase of \$460,665 for the district assistance grants. This entire expansion has been directed to the personnel grant or to increasing the retirement allocation for districts. Only gross salary will be taken from this grant.

District allocations for this grant were based on the new job descriptions that were sent to the districts with memorandum 2008-040. Each district is allocated funds for a District Program Specialist II. This position is funded at the minimum level as stated on the job descriptions. If the current Program Specialist II was frozen at a higher pay rate for the current year, then in FY09, their pay rate will be frozen as well.

Since there were no changes to the job descriptions for the District Program Specialist I and District Technician I, their allocation will be frozen at the rate they were allocated for the current fiscal year. As is mentioned in the job descriptions, district technicians can receive certification. As technicians are certified, their title will change to a District Technician II and their hourly wages will increase provided their current pay rate is less than the beginning salary of a District Technician II. Funds have been set aside to increase the salaries of the technicians after they become certified. Additional information regarding the certification will be sent to the districts in the future.

The district board has the responsibility of determining its employee's compensation. To prevent ongoing inequities, we highly recommend that the boards pay its employees within the appropriate range for that position with state funds. If your district has a change in personnel, you need to contact the program office prior to refilling the position. Please refer to memorandums 2008-006 and 2008-021 for additional requirements.

MoSWIMS and a New Cost-Share Process Begin July 1

By Jessica Royston, Public Information Specialist, District Support Unit

The new Missouri Soil and Water Information Management System will replace the current DCS program on July 1, 2008. Also beginning July 1, all payments will be based on state average costs. This requires a change in the current cost-share process. According to this new process, prior to board approval of the contract, the program office will review it to ensure that commission policies, rules and statutes are met. This will keep landowners from not receiving the expected payment for

a practice because of a misunderstanding between the program office and district on eligibility requirements. After program office approval, the board can approve the contract and the landowner can proceed with the practice. Once the practice is completed, the technician will certify it, the board will review the contract payment and approve it, and then the contract payment will be processed with minimal review done by the program office. Please note that those practices that require a considerable amount of engineering, mainly water impoundment structures and waste management systems, will need eligibility determinations made by the program office prior to the practice being designed. This saves Natural Resources Conservation Service staff time by avoiding designing a practice that does not meet the requirements. Maps will be required once the Conservation

Management GIS tool is available, but until then, districts should continue to submit aerial maps with the contract payment.

Another important change occurring with the usage of state average costs is that IRS 1099 forms will be issued for all cost-share payments including applications rolled over into MoSWIMS. At the time of contract approval, districts will be required to submit a completed Vendor Input form directly to the Office of Administration so that 1099 forms can be sent to landowners. In addition to this, all payments to landowners must be made electronically through direct deposit. Districts will need landowners to complete an Electronic Fund Transfer form. MoSWIMS will contain a link to the required forms.

Commission will Allocate FY10 Cost-Share Funds Based on District Needs Assessments

By Cody Tebbenkamp, Environmental Specialist, District Support Unit

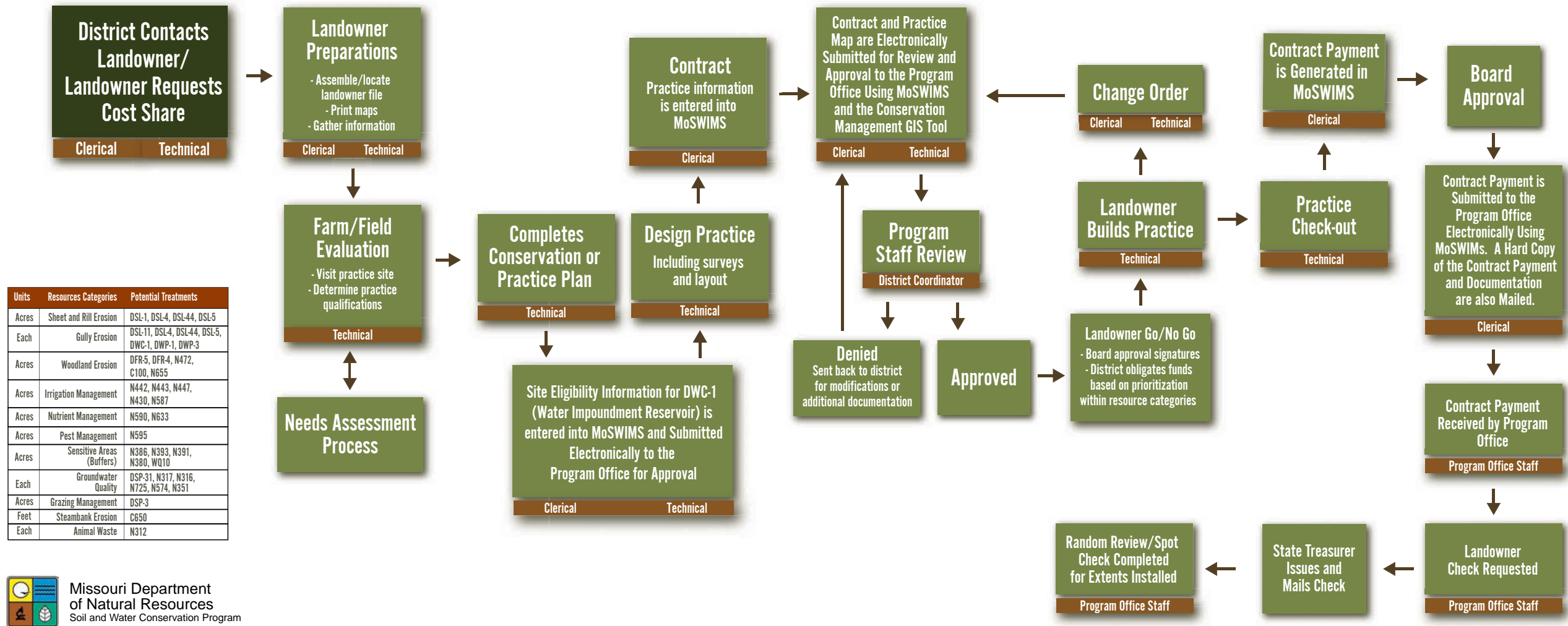
Following RSMo 278 and the commission's rules for allocating cost-share, the commission is charged with allocating appropriations to districts based upon the district's needs. In order to do this, the commission requests that each district perform a five-year needs assessment of their county.

Starting in FY10, the cost-share allocation will be distributed based on a needs assessment developed



Regular and AgNPS SALT Cost Share Process as of July 1, 2008

Protecting the soil and water resources of Missouri.



by each district. The needs assessment will be a comprehensive, multi-year report of the cost-share needs in the district based on resource concerns.

Program office staff is currently working on a needs assessment tool to help districts determine how many dollars they will need to request from the Soil and Water Districts Commission to address their district's specific resource concerns. The needs assessment reports from each district will give the commission an idea of the concerns that need to be addressed around the state and assist them in deciding how to best allocate the cost-share funds. It will also be used to make necessary policy changes in order to conform to the dynamic transformation occurring in agriculture today.

In the following months, the program office will be providing the needs assessment materials to the districts so they can begin putting their respective assessment together for FY10.

Prioritization Sheets Help Districts Determine Who Gets What

*By Jim Plassmeyer, Environmental Specialist,
District Support Unit*

Do you have landowners requesting more cost-share assistance funds than you have available? How does the board decide who will receive cost-share funds? Program office staff is working on cost-share prioritization sheets for districts to use to help in determining which landowners should receive funding and in what order.

The prioritization sheets will consist of questions based on resource concerns with practices associated to them that will address the concern. Boards will have the ability to add their own questions and local concerns to help rank the landowners' requests based on local needs.

As districts are asked to complete a five-year needs assessment plan and the cost-share allocation moves toward being based solely on need, districts can rely on the prioritization sheets to distribute the cost-share funds to landowners. If districts have more requests for assistance than their cost-share allocation, the prioritization sheets will help districts distribute the funds to landowners whose practices will most likely address the resource concern. The prioritizations sheets will be available to districts in FY09.

Wet Weather Impacts FY09

Cost-Share Allocation

*By Jessica Royston, Public Information Specialist,
District Support Unit*

The anticipated FY09 cost-share allocation was recently released to the districts, but these funds are pending Governor Blunt's signature of the budget. This year's allocation was equal to the highest amount claimed during FY05-07, but there are a few exceptions to this formula which will be brought to the commission at its July meeting.

Due to the unusual amount of wet weather, it is likely that many districts will be unable to claim their full cost-share allocation in FY08; as of June 6, districts have claimed \$12.5 million. Based on this, staff will recommend to the commission that they redistribute those additional funds for FY09.

Priority will be given to those districts that experienced wet weather conditions, claimed more in FY08 than their high amount for FY05-07 and ensure that districts have enough funding to cover applications rolled into MoSWIMS.

New and Improved Accounting System Planned for October

By Alex Tuttle, Environmental Specialist, District Support Unit

Program office staff is currently working with programmers in developing a new and improved accounting program scheduled to be available to districts Oct. 1. Currently the system is in development stages and is coming along quickly. User friendliness is the goal of the future system, as the existing system can be quite cumbersome at times. The new system will be Web-based and is being designed to better meet the needs of the districts by providing tools necessary for districts to operate more effectively and efficiently. We are also working towards the ability to scan receipts directly into the system and submit them electronically in order to reduce mailing expenses.

By scanning receipts, districts will no longer be required to send in quarterly reports. We look forward to rolling out the new system Oct. 1.

AgNPS SALT Projects Reach One Hundred Mark

*By Kurt Boeckmann, Environmental Specialist,
Special Practices Unit*

The SALT program has officially awarded the 100th project statewide since the start of the Agricultural Nonpoint Source Special Area Land Treatment projects in July 1997. Recently the commission approved 12 new projects to begin in FY09 on July 1. This brings the number of active AgNPS SALT projects to 73, completed projects to 27, making the total number of projects 100. The Soil and Water Districts Commission has decided not to extend a tenth call with the intention of expanding the regular cost-share program in 2010.

With the continuation of the active SALT projects and the completed projects, the Soil and Water Conservation Program will continue to search for effective best management practices to serve the agricultural community through soil and water conservation districts.

What is Low Mo?

By Greg Caldwell, Soil Scientist

The soils along the Missouri River are some of the most fertile, variable and complex in Missouri. An elevation change of six inches can result in a drastically different soil type. The floodplain soils are very dynamic as well with the potential for major changes to occur literally overnight.

Over a 50 year span from the early 1950s to 2000, soil scientists completed the current soil maps of the Missouri River floodplain. During this time several major flood events occurred, the latest in 1993 and 1995. Prior to these floods, scientists completed most of the county soil surveys along the Missouri River. The current soil maps reflect the soil types and patterns that were present at the time each soil survey was conducted. Due to changes that have occurred in the Missouri River bottoms from flooding and to address inconsistencies identified in county soil survey reports, soil scientists recognized the need to update the maps and data to provide more accurate and consistent soils information.

In 2006, they started the Lower Missouri (Low Mo) project. This project is examining soils in the Missouri River floodplain from where it narrows near the town of Glasgow to the mouth of the Missouri River. Natural

Resources Conservation Service soil scientists in Union initiated it with the assistance of department soil scientists in Union, Jefferson City and Kansas City.

Scientists investigated many soil map units to determine if the named soils were still present. Notes and descriptions of soils and landforms for observed map units were documented as to what, if any, changes have occurred. Several soil profiles have been described with samples sent to the Missouri Soil Characterization Lab for physical and chemical analyses. Soil scientists will use the documentation and lab data to correlate soils that reflect the changes caused by flooding since the initial soil survey was completed.

They were able to establish at least two new soil series as a result of this project. The Low Mo series will likely replace most of the Haynie series mapped in the project area. Low Mo has a thicker, dark surface layer and better subsoil development than the Haynie series. The other new series is Treloar which is a sandy over loamy soil and will be used primarily around levee breaks.

Preliminary review of the data indicates much of the floodplain does not have significant changes from the original soil maps. Some soils will be recorrelated to different series to better reflect the physical and chemical properties of the soils. Areas below levee breaks have been significantly altered, especially by the 1993 and 1995 floods. In places where sand was removed by mechanical excavation and the original soil map unit was unchanged, there will be no change to the soil map. Areas where deposited sand was deep plowed into the soil surface, texture changes were noted. Areas that remain untouched after flood sand deposits will be remapped using a soil map unit of three soils (likely Sarpy, Treloar and Kenmoor). These soils have varying sand depths of about a foot and a half to several feet with loamy or clayey buried horizons.

Field work was completed in May of this year and the project is about 75 percent finished. The documentation and lab data are currently being reviewed and soil maps need to be edited. Updated soil maps and data should be available on the Web soil survey and the Center for Applied Research and Environmental Systems Web site by July of 2009. Future plans are to continue the floodplain project from Glasgow upstream to the Iowa border.

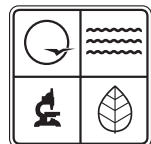
Districts Encouraged to Switch to a Bi-Weekly Payroll with a Two Week Lag

By Jessica Royston, Public Information Specialist,
District Support Unit

The Soil and Water Conservation Program Office recently sent out a memo encouraging districts to switch to a bi-weekly pay period with a two week lag in payroll, with all districts on the same payroll schedule. Recent audit findings show districts being cited for improper and inefficient payroll processing.

This switch to a lag pay will not only save districts time and money, but it will make more efficient use of supervisor's time. District employees will use less time and money to track down board members to sign checks. This is especially relevant as costs for mileage increase. This will also reduce audit findings in the future and provide districts with improved accounting support from the department. The department has also allowed districts to offer employees a transition payment so no one will miss any scheduled paychecks.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the switch to a bi-weekly payroll with a two week lag in payroll, please refer to memo 2008-039, available at www.dnr.mo.gov/env/swcp/correspondence.htm or contact your district coordinator.



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